

Rosa leaves Oregon Cattlemen’s Association

By Mateusz Perkowski
Capital Press

SALEM — The removal of gray wolves from Oregon’s endangered species list is a defining moment of Jerome Rosa’s six-year tenure as executive director of the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association.



Rosa

The decision was a key policy objective of the OCA, whose members have struggled with wolf depredation of livestock, he said. “That was really monumental.”

A framed copy of House Bill 4040, which nullified an environmentalist lawsuit over the wolf delisting in 2016, hung on his office wall in Salem.

Rosa’s last day with the OCA was July 10. He taking over as executive director of the Arizona Cattle Growers Association at the end the month.

As OCA’s leaders look for Rosa’s replacement, they say his work with legislators and regulators exemplifies his value to the organization.

Rosa “elevated the professionalism” of the association and he “had a big presence at the Capitol that will be missed,” said Todd Nash, the group’s president-elect and a Wallowa County rancher.

Whoever steps into Rosa’s shoes must establish a solid connection with lawmakers, industry leaders and the OCA’s rancher members, Nash said.

“Communication in all of that is huge,” he said.

It’s not an easy time for the cattle industry, which had faced several tough economic years even before the coronavirus outbreak, he said.

The organization’s next executive director will need an in-depth understanding of the problems facing cattle producers and ability to navigate the legislative landscape while also managing OCA’s finances, staff and regular meetings, said Tom Sharp, a Harney County rancher and the group’s current president.

“We’re looking for a lot of capability,” Sharp said. “That’s a lot I’m asking for and a lot that we’re looking for.”

During Rosa’s time at the organization, he was instrumental in hiring and overseeing the OCA’s staff.

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Photo by Bill Bradshaw/EO Media Group

Wallowa County farmer Tim Melville, left, holds the white blossoms of peas growing below the taller, yellow-blossomed mustard plants that his grandson, Case Melville, holds in a Cornerstone Farms field north of Enterprise on Friday, July 3. Tim Melville says letting peas grow under mustard or canola allows for a greater yield than either grown separately.

Mellow yellow Canola, mustard ‘intercropped’ with peas

Farm family looks to boosts productivity and to the future

By Bill Bradshaw
EO Media Group

WALLOWA COUNTY — You’re driving down the highway amid green and brown fields when you come around a corner to an explosion of yellow. No, it’s not overgrown dandelions; it’s canola or mustard, but it often takes a farmer or a botanist to know the difference.

Cornerstone Farms, owned and operated by Tim and Audry Melville, along with their sons Kevin and Kurt, has many of its nearly 5,000 Wallowa County acres in either canola or mustard, growing over a crop of one of five types of peas, Tim said. The farm also produces wheat, barley, oats, flax and alfalfa and timothy grass hay. The Melvilles raise no livestock.

Kevin said the family farm started doing the practice about three years ago after learning it from Canadian farmers. It is supposed to offer greater yields for each of the crops than they would produce grown on their own.



Photo by Bill Bradshaw/EO Media Group

A blanket of yellow canola with an undercoat of white pea blossoms covers a Cornerstone Farms field north of Enterprise. The practice of intercropping — growing the two crops together — produces a greater yield than either would produce separately, said farm co-owner Kevin Melville.

“That’s the theory,” Kevin said. “It’s called ‘intercropping’ where you do two or three crops together on purpose.”

Tim agreed. “If you plant them together, they yield more than if you grow them separately,” he said.

Grown alone, Kevin said peas in a dryland field produce about 1,500-2,000 pounds

per acre, while mustard comes in at 750-1,000 pounds per acre, with canola a bit higher. But that requires 1 acre for peas and another for canola or mustard.

When “intercropped,” the farm sees 1,200-1,400 pounds an acre of peas and 500 pounds of mustard on the same acre.

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Oregon jobless rate drops to 11.2%

Union County jobless claims drop closer to pre-pandemic levels; Baker County hardest hit in hospitality sector

By Ronald Bond
EO Medis Group

LA GRANDE — The jobs lost in Oregon during coronavirus-related shutdowns are starting to come back — but there is a long way to go.

A press release Tuesday from the Oregon Employment Department showed the state gained 56,600 jobs in June, more than double the 26,100 jobs the state added in May. The more than 82,000 jobs added dropped the state’s unemployment rate to 11.2%, and represents just close to one-third (31%) of the jobs lost during March and April, when stay-at-home orders were put in place. The rate fell to a level on par with the nation, which had a rate in June of 11.1%.

The number of continued unemployment claims in the state, which averaged just more than 25,000 during the first three months of the year then spiked to more than 194,000 in April and May, dropped to 153,831 in June, according to date from the OED.

Those from 25-44 years old account for about half (75,706) of those continuing to file unemployment claims.

The state was at 1,955,700 nonfarm jobs at the time of the February report. There were 13,200 fewer jobs at the time of the March report before the total plummeted to 1,689,700 in April, a drop of 266,000 jobs from February. The current total still is 183,300 off the count in February.

Initial claims in Union County, which reached as high as 307 in a week in late March, 311 in early April and hung above 265 weekly for a month, have dropped closer to pre-pandemic levels. The county reported 96 new first-time claims the week ending June 20, 90 the week ending June 27 and 57 the week ending July 4, the lowest total since 50 were reported the week ending May 30.

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Shaved ice business helps beat the summer heat

Family enterprise booming in La Grande’s Riverside Park

By Sabrina Thompson
EO Media Group

LA GRANDE — Decorated with a tiki hut theme, Snoasis is helping visitors at Riverside Park beat the heat with shaved ice. Owned by a single mother of four, the shaved ice shack has seen an increase in businesses this summer despite COVID-19.

“People enjoy that feeling of a normal summer,” owner Olivia Westenskow said.

Shaved ice is different than a snow cone. Rather than using crushed ice, the cold treats are made with a machine that slices into a large block of ice to create shavings, to which flavored syrups are added.

Westenskow brought Snoasis to La Grande from Boise in 2017. She established a contract with the La Grande Parks and Recreation Department and began selling shaved ice at the park in 2018. The mobile shack features 69 flavors, with the option to mix and match and add special toppings, such as sour spray or ice cream.

She operates the shack with



Photo by Sabrina Thompson/EO Media Group

A young girl buys shaved ice from Snoasis at Riverside Park, La Grande.

another family, running Snoasis every other week with the help of her four children — age 5, 8, 13 and 15 — during the summer. The children assist with everything from filling syrup dispensers to working the till. Westenskow said it is a great opportunity for her children to work on their math and social skills during the summer.

“It’s like a hobby business,” she said. “And it is a great way for the kids to earn money. This is the first year my 8-year old will work the till,” adding that the

kids use an app to help with the math.

Westenskow said her children also help advertise — they stand outside the shack eating the shaved ice to draw other children to the bright teal structure on a trailer.

Westenskow was prepared to open the business after spending her teen years working in a shaved ice shack.

“It was just so much fun and such a great experience,”

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Photo by Sabrina Thompson/EO Media Group

Rainbow shaved ice is one of the most popular choices at Snoasis in La Grande. It features banana, strawberry and blue raspberry syrups.